

23. (Currently Amended) A method for fabricating a pre-metal dielectric structure for a silicon-oxide-nitride-oxide-silicon (SONOS) memory transistor, the method comprising:

forming a first pre-metal dielectric layer over the SONOS memory transistor;

forming a light-absorbing structure over the first-pre-metal dielectric layer;

forming a second pre-metal dielectric layer over the light-absorbing structure;

forming a first metal layer over the second pre-metal dielectric layer; and

~~The method of Claim 22, further comprising forming~~
a silicon nitride barrier film over the SONOS memory transistor and below the first pre-metal dielectric layer.

24. (Currently Amended) A method for fabricating a pre-metal dielectric structure for a silicon-oxide-nitride-oxide-silicon (SONOS) memory transistor, the method comprising:

forming a first pre-metal dielectric layer over the SONOS memory transistor;

forming a light-absorbing structure over the first-pre-metal dielectric layer ~~The method of Claim 22,~~ wherein the light-absorbing structure is formed by depositing a first layer of polycrystalline silicon over the first pre-metal dielectric layer;

forming a second pre-metal dielectric layer over the light-absorbing structure;

forming a first metal layer over the second pre-metal dielectric layer.

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